



ASHEVILLE DOWNTOWN COMMISSION

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

April 13, 2007 8:00 am

Office of Economic Development 29 Haywood Street in Downtown Asheville

Members Present: Guadalupe Chavarria, Kitty Love, Peter Alberice, Pat Whalen, Dwight Butner, Pam Myers, John Rogers, Jan Davis, Julie Brandt

Members absent: Jesse Plaster, Brad Galbraith

Staff: Scott Shuford, Sam Powers, Jessica Levensgood, Bob Oast, Stephanie Monson

Guests: Karen Tessier, Steve McManus, Ryan Masters, Dennis Goodwin, Gary Koerner, Dennis Pearson, Eric Valez, Bill Daves, Adam Pittman, Tom Abbot, Tom Nelson, Kelly Miller, Brook Messing, Joshua Sephowitz, Terry Pendleton, James Shea

Chairman Whalen opened the meeting at 8:05 am.

Design Review

The Ellington

Note: Council member Jan Davis did not attend this portion of the meeting.

Members of the development team were introduced by Bill Daves.

Tom Abbott, CFO of the Grove Park Inn, described how the project fit into Asheville; that a shuttle bus is planned to circulate between downtown and the Grove Park Inn; that for the next 75 years a portion of the proceeds from any of the condo sales will be deposited into a workforce housing fund managed by the Community Foundation; and that they would provide a shuttle for all their employees.

Mike Webster from Beck development provided a basic summary of the scope of the project: a luxury boutique hotel mixed with approximately 50 residential condos located between Lexington Ave and Biltmore Ave, on an L shaped lot (also fronts Aston) next to Doc Chey's restaurant. The project total is 359,000 SF and would provide 189 internal parking spaces.

Gary Koerner from 3Architecture went over the proposed design in detail. He noted that they would like to start construction at the end of this year; that start time would have them finished in fall 2009.

Some notes from his presentation:

Arrival area proposed as a curb cut on Biltmore Avenue, with one way vehicular traffic off Biltmore. The building would be set back from the street, but would include active use/sidewalk café in that setback. Materials at street level entrance will be dominated by glass.

4 levels of parking at grade and below. Architecture termed “neo deco” as an homage to Douglas Ellington and others. Height is broken up by repeated setbacks at the base middle and cap of the building.

Balconies are planned and will not venture into public or other private airspace. Colors will be neutral e.g. buff/gray (brick/masonry).

Commission members went around the table with comments and questions.

In regards to UDO and Downtown Design Guidelines being met, it was acknowledged that there were questions on the following: zero setbacks, using 80% of the Biltmore Ave frontage, Lexington street level façade as a blank wall/featureless façade, and the disruption of the pedestrian feel/sidewalk continuum by using Biltmore as an entryway/driveway.

Commission members generally found the project appealing, and had the following comments to make:

Make Lexington side more pedestrian friendly, or respect the auto scale and use larger art or visuals instead of the commercial vitrines to line the blank wall.

Re- think the Biltmore Avenue entrance/circulation pattern.

Add retail to Lexington side. Come up with some specifics regarding sustainability of the building. The development team noted they plan on taking about 2 months to refine the design and would come back to the Downtown Design Review Subcommittee with details before a formal review.

Pritchard Park Committee

Julie Brandt, Guadalupe Charvarria and John Rogers volunteered to serve on the Pritchard Park Committee. Kitty Love noted that when the time was right, she wanted to help with programming for the park.

The first meeting is scheduled for Friday, 2007.

Master Plan process

The Commission had a well received presentation this past Tuesday at City Council. Council gave feedback for the Commission to work on.

The Commission’s Design Review subcommittee will meet next Wed the 18th at noon in the OED office to work on the master plan process. Members discussed concerns that need to be addressed at that meeting.

The next deadline for the Commission is to have a short presentation ready for May 10th when they will go in front of Council’s PED subcommittee.

Whalen asked staff to email him the developer’s checklist.

Announcements

Meeting Length

Chairman Whalen has the intention to keep regular meetings limited to 1 & 1/2 hours in length. He is open to discussion on how best to achieve this as historically design reviews have taken up an extraordinary amount of the regular meeting times. One suggestion is to limit each presentation to ten minutes. To encourage brevity, each Commission member will wait to be recognized by the chair and will limit their comment or question to 2 minutes.

Whalen would like each member to be doing Commission work in subcommittees that can then be presented during regular meetings.

Legal

City Attorney Bob Oast wanted the Commission to revisit concepts regarding open meetings laws and conflict of interest; one example of an area of interpretation is open meetings via e-mail; for instance members should members not deliberate on matters using “reply all” as that could then be perceived as an open meeting? The Commission noted that they were interested in scheduling a meeting with Bob Oast to address specific legal issues

TDA grant

The committee discussed TDA product development funding. The Civic Center, the Asheville Art Museum, and the Pack Square Conservancy are all requesting funding. Dwight Butner made a motion that the Commission writes letters of support for all three projects. John Rogers seconded. Pam Myers abstained (as director of the Art Museum) the rest were in favor; the motion passed.

Spare Change for Real Change Lockboxes

The City Council asked that the Downtown Association get their lockbox design approved by the Downtown Commission. Dwight will bring the design to the Design Review Subcommittee on Wednesday for comments.

Meeting Time

Chairman Whalen noted that he would like to change the meeting time. Julie Brandt made a motion to move the regular meeting time of the Downtown Commission from 8 am to 8 30 am. John Rogers seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Staff noted that they would ask the City Clerk how to legally process this change and advertise.

The meeting adjourned at 10 am.

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